1: Meek E, G-5 (1925-1930) 1931
FF38 Katab FF38

ascribed to witchcraft, and those who die of smallpox are believed to have been witches. Indeed, if a man is assailed by small-pox a bundle of grass is brought to him and he is asked to count out the number of those whom he has devoured. A full confession may save his life, but if he dies his guilt is proved, and his body is taken out of the hut by a hole made in the wall, his eyes are pierced (so that his disembodied spirit may never again be able to see anyone on whom he may fix his spells), and his corpse is buried without ceremony and without the customary lamentations. Most towns have their own leech (*obo*). The patient pays the cost of the medicine, and if he recovers bestows a gift on the leech. Cupping is practised in cases of fever; also inoculation for small-pox, the fluid being taken from the pustules of a man suffering from a mild attack and transfused into the blood of a healthy man, by means of a scratch made with a razor. For toothache wild olive oil is placed in the hollow of the decayed tooth. A red hot arrow is then inserted, and the tooth is split into pieces, which are extracted one by one. The Katab do not follow the Hausa custom of slitting the gums of a child. But the uvula is snipped off on naming day with the object of preventing attacks of quinsy or tonsilitis.

Death.—On the occurrence of death the women of the household give way to tears and lamentation, and men may also be seen weeping. All relatives are immediately informed, and messengers are dispatched to summon distant relatives such as the married sister of the deceased. The death of a chief (by chief is meant civil and not religious chief) is, however, kept secret for a period of seven days, none but the closest senior relatives, the grave-diggers, and the priests of Elenowum and Obwai being informed. Interment follows as soon as possible—in the evening if the deceased had died in the morning, in the morning if he had died during the previous evening. But a chief is always buried at night, for no one but those whose duty it is to bury him may look on his corpse. The body, covered with a cloth jumper, is wrapped in a mat of plaited palm fronds. (But a chief is buried in a gown.) Burial is, for commoners and chief, in the compound, and a fresh grave is used for each body. Old men and chiefs are buried underneath the entrance hut of the compound. Those who die of smallpox are denied burial rites, the corpse being wrapped in a mat and deposited in the bush.

587 Secondary affinal marriage occurs: a man may inherit widows of his grandfather, father and brother, but only when these are young women and do not have adult lineal descendants with whom they can live.[25a]

595 Seniority is important among women of the compound, as among men, but how seniority is determined, in view of the complexities arising through the institution of secondary marriage, is not clear.[27] A husband spends two nights with each of his wives in turn, in his own hut, if he has one. Men and women eat in separate groups, the women always in or before the hut of the chief wife. If there is a tendency towards friction between successive generations, relations between alternate generations are characterized by a degree of cordiality. According to Meek, relations between and among siblings reflect a similar convention: on the whole, alternate children are closer and take greater pleasure in one another's company than successive children.

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Death and Burial

753 Meek's statement that " illnesses and premature deaths are ascribed to witchcraft, and those who die of smallpox are believed to have been witches," is not apparently meant to be taken literally.[28] Without exception treatments for illness described by Meek appear to have no element of magic about them: there is even " inoculation for smallpox, the fluid being taken from the pustules of a man suffering from a mild attack, and transfused into the blood of a healthy man by means of a scratch made with a razor," which, though it differs from current European medical procedure, is not alleged to be a witch-finding ordeal.

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764 Interment generally follows death within 12 to 18 hours, though the burial of a civil chief, whose death is kept secret for seven days, may be delayed for 24 hours 766 if necessary to comply with the rule that a chief must be buried under cover of night. The body of a commoner is clothed in the short Hausa-Fulani gown (*tobe*), that of a chief in a robe (*riga*), and finally wrapped in an ordinary mat of palm-fibre. Burial is generally in the home-compound; old men and chiefs are buried beneath the entrance-hut. The grave is described as decanter-shaped, about 6 ft. deep. If the deceased has been a man of importance, a stone is set up on the grave to mark the site for his descendants who may wish to make offerings to their dead ancestor (see *Religious Beliefs and Practices*, below).

When burial—presided over by the *magajin elenowum*—is complete, horns are sounded (if the deceased had reached a respectable age), beer is drunk, and a feast may follow. In the case of a chief, his immediate relatives are " officially " informed of his death—and burial—a week later, but public announcement is not made for perhaps a month, when a general feast is held. According to Meek, however, " the real funeral feast " will not be held until the dry season (presumably delayed only in case of death in the rains): this lasts for two days, during which the senior male relatives go to the *obwai* hut, then come forth and join in a general dance.

765 Regarding mourning, Meek says that a widow allows her hair to grow long, refrains from washing and smears her body daily with ochre for one or two months. At the end of this period she is shaved and washed in the river by female relatives. Though men themselves do not make a display of mourning, a woman mourns in

[25a] A woman may choose, apparently, whether she will be inherited by her husband's son or grandson.

[27] The wives of any man rank according to the length of time they have been his wives; but it is not stated whether a wife loses seniority by absence (as the secondary wife of another man), whether a secondary wife ever out-ranks a primary wife, or how the wives of males of varying rank in the compound are ranked (whether, for example, the senior wife of the senior male, or compound head, is inevitably the senior woman of the compound, even though she may be very junior from the point of view of actual residence). It is made clear only that the age of the women does not enter into calculation of their rank.

[28] Meek's qualification of this statement appears in an earlier section of his account of Katab, where he notes that the Katab " does not surround himself with amulets and talismans " nor live in constant dread of evil spirits.